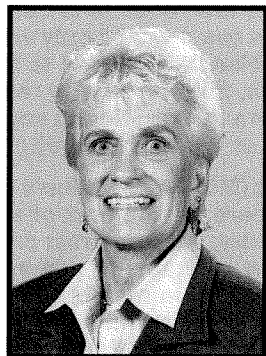


# Hammerstrom's

for the people  
in the 17th Senate District

# Hotline



State Senator  
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September 13, 2004



**FALL SEASON BEGINNING TO SHOW ITS TRUE COLORS** The fall season triggers another change in Michigan's beautiful landscape. Cooler night temperatures have set in motion the natural chemical reaction that takes place as leaves change from green to bright yellows, reds, and oranges. Tree leaves in the Upper Peninsula begin to change their colors in the middle of September, with the rest of the state's leaves following all the way through the end of October. Michigan offers many different scenic tours for people to enjoy the magnificent variety of colors, both in the Upper and Lower Peninsulas. The Travel Michigan website, [www.travel.michigan.org](http://www.travel.michigan.org), lists a number of areas throughout the state known for their spectacular array of leaf colors. The site also provides a list of Michigan's cider mills and an opportunity to sign up for "Weekly Color Updates."

**DID YOU KNOW?** Leaves have just as much yellow pigment (xanthophyll) in July when they are green as they do in October when they are yellow. In July, the darker green pigment (chlorophyll) masks the yellow color.

**STATE CONTINUES TO FIGHT INVASIVE SPECIES** The Michigan Legislature, in conjunction with the Secretary of State, has announced the Great Lakes Protection Fund Decal as its latest tool in a collaborative effort to protect the state's waters from zebra mussels and other invasive species. The decal's design is a combination of over 350 submissions from the Secretary of State's 2004 Watercraft Decal Design Challenge launched in May. Decals will be available for purchase online, beginning October 1, and the cost is \$35, with proceeds earmarked for the Great Lakes Protection Fund. To ensure the program is fiscally responsible, a minimum of 2,000 decals must be sold in the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, and at least 500 decals must be sold each year thereafter for the program to continue. Proceeds from the decal will support education and research in the fight to eliminate invasive species. The 3-inch square decal is decorative only and does not replace any required watercraft registration or identification stickers. The decal adheres best to flat, smooth surfaces and may be placed wherever desired, including cars, trucks, trailers, boats, and other vehicles.

**EXERCISE CAUTION NEAR SCHOOL BUSES** School is in session and that means school buses are once again sharing the roads with other drivers. By following a few safety tips, as well as the law, those who drive on Michigan's roads this school year will keep our children safe during their morning and afternoon school bus trips. State law requires drivers to stop at least 20 feet from the front or rear of a school bus when its red lights are flashing. Vehicles can proceed only when the bus resumes motion, or when signaled by the school bus driver to proceed. Drivers should also be prepared to stop for a school bus when its yellow lights are flashing. If you are a parent, you can also help keep our children safe by teaching them the safety rules of traveling to and from school, whether by bike, foot, or bus. For more information in regard to school bus safety, please visit the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's website at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).

**MICHIGAN EDUCATION TRUST OPENS ENROLLMENT PERIOD** The Michigan Education Trust (MET), the nation's first guaranteed tuition program, recently opened its new enrollment period. Parents can help prepare for the cost of their children's college education by purchasing a MET contract. MET offers a graduated pricing structure, with contract prices dependent upon the age or grade of the intended beneficiary, as well as the option of purchasing contracts by semester. Contracts can also be purchased for all high school-age students. Contracts can be transferred to immediate family members of the original beneficiary (including siblings, children, and first cousins) once the original beneficiary turns 18 years old or graduates from high school. However, no single beneficiary can have more than four years of education benefits. MET has sold more than 74,000 contracts since its debut in 1988, with assets valued at \$963 million. MET contract purchasers are eligible for a state income tax deduction for the total contract price, including enrollment fees. Open enrollment for the program ends June 15, 2005. For more information about MET, call 1-800 MET-4KID or visit [www.met4kid.com](http://www.met4kid.com).

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If you would like to receive future issues of Hammerstrom's Hotline via e-mail,  
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